

Some people think any proposal short of mass deportation is amnesty. I disagree. There's a rational middle ground between automatic citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation. Illegal immigrants who have roots in our country and want to stay should have to pay a meaningful penalty, pay their taxes, learn English, and work in a job for a number of years. People who meet these conditions should be able to apply for citizenship, but approval will not be automatic, and they will have to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the law.

Fifth, we must honor the great American tradition of the melting pot by helping newcomers assimilate into our society. Americans are bound together by our shared ideals: an appreciation of our history; respect for our flag; and the ability to speak and write in English. We will work to ensure that every new citizen fully embraces our common culture. When immigrants assimilate, they will advance in our society, realize their dreams, renew our spirit, and add to the unity of America.

Congress is now considering legislation on immigration reform. That legislation must be comprehensive. All elements of this problem must be addressed together or none of them will be solved at all. The House started the debate by passing an immigration bill. Now the Senate should act by the end of this month, so we can work out the differences between the two bills, and Congress can pass a bill for me to sign into law.

We should approach this debate with confidence. America has shown before that we can enforce our laws and uphold our values, and we will do it again. Our Nation honors the heritage of all who've come here because we trust in our country's genius for making us all Americans, one Nation under God.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:45 a.m. on May 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 19 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Formation of Iraq's Government

May 20, 2006

I congratulate Prime Minister Maliki on the formation of Iraq's new unity Government. Iraqis now have a fully constitutional government, marking the end of a democratic transitional process in Iraq that has been both difficult and inspiring. This broadly representative unity Government offers a new opportunity for progress in Iraq.

The new Government reflects Iraq's diversity and opens a new chapter in that country's history. Iraq's new leaders know the period ahead will be filled with great challenge. But they also know that they—and their great country—will not face them alone. The United States and freedom-loving nations around the world will stand with Iraq as it takes its place among the world's democracies and as an ally in the war on terror.

Today, as Iraqis look to their new Government, they can be proud that in 3 years they have progressed from the oppression of a brutal dictator who fomented sectarian divides to an elected government in which all Iraqis have a voice. As Iraq's leaders work together to chart the future of their nation, bringing freedom and security to the Iraqi people, they make the world a safer place for all of us. The sacrifices of many of our country's noblest and bravest have helped make this day possible. We will not forget their contribution to our security and Iraq's democracy.

Remarks on the Formation of Iraq's Government

May 21, 2006

The formation of a unity government in Iraq is a new day for the millions of Iraqis who want to live in freedom. And the formation of the unity Government in Iraq begins a new chapter in our relationship with Iraq.

This morning I called the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker to congratulate them on working together to form the unity Government. I assured them that the United States will continue to assist the

Iraqis in the formation of a free country, because I fully understand that a free Iraq will be an important ally in the war on terror, will serve as a devastating defeat for the terrorists and Al Qaida, and will serve as an example for others in the region who desire to be free.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq.

Remarks on the War on Terror and a Question-and-Answer Session in Chicago, Illinois

May 22, 2006

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in Chicago, home of the mighty Chicago White Sox, world champs. I said that because the mayor is here—[laughter]—who, by the way, is one of the finest mayors in our country. Mayor Daley, thank you for being here. He's a huge Chicago White Sox fan. When I had the White Sox to the White House to congratulate them on the world championship—winning the world championship trophy, there was the mayor, beaming.

The other team here isn't doing quite so well these days. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, I had the honor, though, of throwing out the first pitch in the Chicago Cubs home opener against Cincinnati, and they won that game 16 to 7. You know, when you're President, sometimes you get blamed for a lot of things. [Laughter] So I want to assure all the Cubs fans here that the last time I saw them play, they were undefeated. [Laughter]

I really appreciate being invited here by the National Restaurant Association. Thanks for having me. You know, Laura and I don't eat out as much as we used to. [Laughter] But we do appreciate your industry's contribution to the country.

I appreciate your leadership in Washington on really important issues like tort reform and tax relief and immigration reform.

I'm going to spend a little time today talking about immigration reform. But the main reason I've come today is to talk to you about a watershed event that took place this weekend in Iraq. On Saturday, in Baghdad, Iraqis formed a new Government, and the world saw the beginning of something new—constitutional democracy at the heart of the Middle East.

And if you like, after my remarks I'd like to answer some of your questions. So be thinking of them.

But before I get there, I do want to thank Ed Tinsley. He's a West Texan, and like me, he married a woman from Midland, Texas. It's the best decision Tinsley ever made, and it's the best decision I ever made. Laura sends her greetings to you all. She's a fine First Lady, and I'm lucky she said yes when I asked her to marry me.

I appreciate Steven Anderson, the President and CEO of the National Restaurant Association. I appreciate sharing the stage with Denny Hastert. He is an excellent Speaker of the House. He is dependable, reliable, smart, capable. Do you realize that he will have served, come June 1st, longer than any other Republican Speaker in our Nation's history? And the reason why, he knows what he's doing.

And I appreciate Congressman Ray LaHood and Congresswoman Judy Biggert for joining us as well, today. They're here looking for a ride back to Washington on Air Force One. [Laughter] I appreciate all the State and local officials for coming too.

Our economy is strong, and it's growing. And the restaurant industry plays a vital role in this prosperity. National unemployment is 4.7 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. People are working. We've added over 2 million jobs in the last 2½ years. And one of the main reasons why is because the National Restaurant Association members are employing people. The NRA—National Restaurant Association—estimates that more than 12.5 million people work at 925,000 restaurants across our country. That makes restaurants the largest private employer in our land.

You not only help people put food on the table but you provide many Americans with their first job, with a start. You teach people